



Navajo Nation
Department of Diné Education

NAVAJO NATION School Reopening Plan

Navajo Nation Board of Education Approved on 6/16/2021

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Navajo Nation Reopening Plan Background

The Department of Diné Education (DODE) and the Navajo Health Command Operations Center (NHCOC) collaborated to create the Navajo Nation School Reopening Plan (hereafter referred to as “Plan”) to guide the reopening of schools on the Navajo Nation in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. DODE is delegated to implement the procedures, policies, directives, and guidance as approved by the Navajo Nation Board of Education (NNBOE) regarding both the enforcement of Navajo Nation laws and the education of children on the Navajo Nation. The Navajo Nation Department of Health (NDOH) is delegated to ensure the health care and public health services provided within the Navajo Nation are quality, comprehensive, and culturally relevant. The Health Command Operations Center under NDOH is assigned to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Under the Plan, schools located within the Navajo Nation shall create their own comprehensive and detailed COVID-19 policies and procedures, which will provide regulations to implement safe practices to prepare administrators, staff, and students when they return to in-person operations. Schools shall create, submit and implement a School Reopening Plan and complete an accompanying Reopening Readiness Assessment Attestation form to DODE prior to providing in-person services. School policies and procedures shall not conflict with this Plan, Navajo Nation Public Health Emergency Orders (PHEOs) Executive Orders from the Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President (OPVP), or any resolutions passed by the NNBOE. This Plan is enacted to ensure the safety of all students on the Navajo Nation. As new data and research become available, this Plan may be updated to better meet the needs of our schools and students.

Schools shall develop their reopening plans to address the needs of the schools, the students, and the communities they serve, and those plans shall be approved by the local school board. Local school board members should also ensure that the local schools’ reopening plans comply with NNBOE and Navajo Nation Council resolutions, as well as Navajo Nation PHEOs and executive orders. DODE will monitor schools and ensure compliance with this Plan and the above authorities.



Window Rock, AZ

Criteria to Safely Reopening

- ✔ All Schools are expected to have consulted with parents and families (through surveys and other outreach methods) to determine the best setting for their children.
- ✔ All schools will continue to abide by current Navajo Nation Executive Orders and Navajo Nation Public Health Orders.

Individual School Reopening Plans

- ✔ Schools must have three plans in place: Remote, Hybrid, and In Person Learning
- ✔ Schools will follow Navajo Nation COVID-19 Safe Schools Framework. Please see Appendix A and the DODE School Reopening Readiness Assessment.
- ✔ All school reopening plans will incorporate CDC guidelines and appropriate state guidelines for safety protocols and procedures.

Reopening Readiness Assessment

All schools will complete the Reopening Readiness Assessment (RRA) Checklist at each of their school sites. The school or district will assemble a Readiness Assessment review team, with the recommended composition of five individuals: (see Appendix C- Glossary for definitions of each individual).

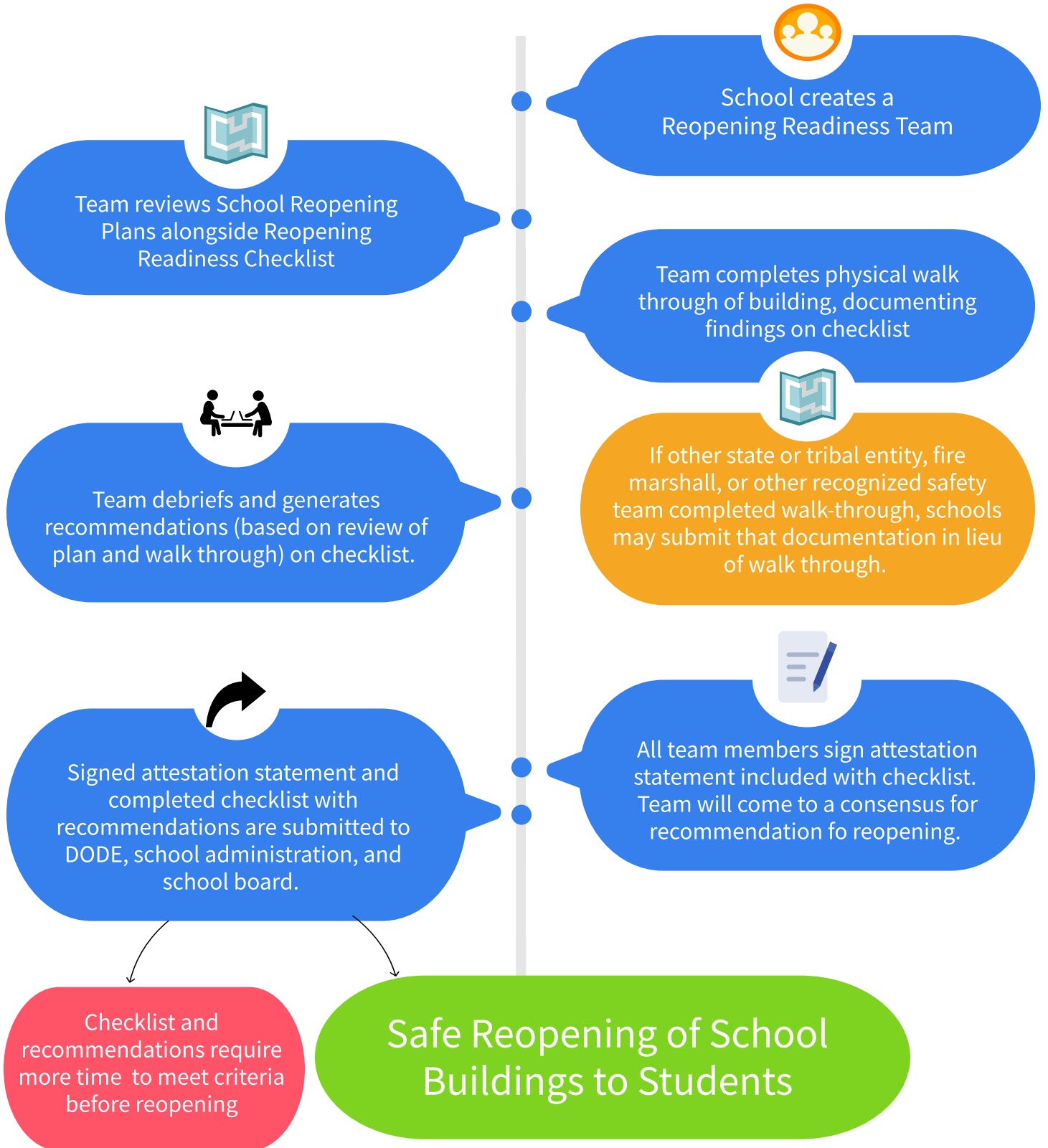
- (1) administrator
- (1) local health worker
- (1) educator
- (1) facility/maintenance representative
- (1) parent/guardian or community member

Although not required, the school may also invite additional members from their local Indian Health Service health facility or tribal health facility, school board members, Department of Diné Education staff, Navajo Department of Health (NDOH), or Navajo Health Command Operations Center (NHCOC)

The readiness checklist is aligned with CDC guidelines and can be found in accompanying document titled, "Navajo Nation School Reopening Readiness Assessment." Once completed, the school will submit the readiness assessment document and Signature of Attestation to the Department of Dine Education at schoolreopening@nndode.org. The school is also encouraged to share with their stakeholders.

Reopening Readiness Assessment

Visual Process of Readiness Assessment



**All documentation can be sent to:
schoolreopening@nndode.org**

Note: There is an exception of schools that have already met all criteria and can supply documentation and evidence to show readiness in all areas of readiness assessment.

Navajo Nation COVID-19 Safe Schools Framework

The Navajo Nation COVID-19 Safe Schools Framework establishes that K-12 Schools and Headstart will be open for in-person learning across all phases with core prevention strategies in place. Administrative personnel can reference the framework to identify required core prevention strategies and determine if conditional prevention measures are necessary. This document can be found in full as Appendix A, and has been incorporated into this Navajo Nation School Reopening Plan to ensure alignment of support. It is the expectation of DODE that all schools follow both the Safe Schools Framework and the School Reopening Plan.

The Safe Schools framework safety measures are categorized in two main areas of prevention strategies: Core Prevention Strategies and Conditional Prevention Strategies.



Core prevention strategies

“Core prevention” refers to the basic core set of COVID-19 prevention practices that should be always in place. These are detailed in Table 1. of this document.

Prevention practices include parent options for hybrid and/or virtual learning, masks, physical distancing, student cohorting, hygiene, cleaning and ventilation, diagnostic testing, contact tracing, and reporting. An exception falls under the critical/very high transmission (purple phase) where in-person learning may be restricted to selected students.



Conditional prevention strategies

“Conditional prevention” refers to additional strict prevention strategies that will be implemented in phases with higher transmission according to Navajo Nation Gating Criteria.

Conditional prevention measures are strict prevention strategies that include screening testing. These prevention strategies may be implemented in other phases at the discretion of the school.

While the framework color-coded system is consistent with the color-coded system the NN HCOC uses in the Navajo Nation Gating Measures, the COVID-19 Safe Schools Framework provides requirements and recommendations to support continuous in-person learning.

Guidance for activities not outlined in this document will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and released through a Navajo Nation Public Health Emergency Order and/or Executive Order.

COVID-19 Safe Schools Framework- Core Prevention Strategies

The core prevention strategies are required prevention practices that are present in each color-coded phase of reopening outlined below.

Table 1: Core Prevention Strategies.

✓ = Required	Critical/ Very High Transmission	High Transmission	Substantial Transmission	Moderate Transmission	Low Transmission
Schools OPEN for In-Person Learning	Selected Students	✓	✓	✓	✓
Parent Options For Hybrid and/or Virtual Learning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Masks Universal and Correct Use	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Student Cohorting Divide students into smaller groups by classrooms and buses	✓	✓			
Physical Distancing At least 3-6 feet between students in a classroom	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hygiene, Cleaning and Ventilation Maintain healthy facilities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Diagnostic Testing Referral of symptomatic or exposed individuals to health care facility for testing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Contact Tracing Timely Isolation & Quarantine, and contact with local health care facility	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reporting Required To local health care facility HCOE exposure portal, and weekly public notification	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
COVID-19 Vaccination Strongly encouraged (★) for eligible staff and students	★	★	★	★	★

For more detailed guidance on these strategies, refer to the School Reopening Readiness Assessment.

COVID-19 Safe Schools Framework- Conditional Prevention Strategies

Conditional prevention measures are strict prevention strategies that include screening testing. These prevention strategies may be implemented in other phases at the discretion of the school.

Table 2. Conditional Prevention Strategies

Strategy	Setting & Description		Frequency based on transmission level				
			Critical/Very High	High	Substantial	Moderate	Low
Screening Testing (Options are in the Additional Information section) Note: vaccinated individuals are exempt from screening testing	Classroom	Testing of select groups of unvaccinated teachers, staff, and students	Recommended 1-2x per week for teachers/staff/students			Optional 1x per week for teachers/staff	
		Sports	Low and Intermediate Risk	Recommended 1x per week		Optional 1x per week	
	High Risk		Recommended 2x per week		Optional 1x per week		

Appendix A

Navajo Nation

COVID-19 Safe Schools Framework

June 2021

INTRODUCTION:

The Navajo Nation COVID-19 Safe Schools Framework has been developed to guide the reopening of all schools and Head Start across the Navajo Nation. This framework offers in-person learning recommendations with core and conditional prevention strategies, based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines.

The [CDC School Operational Strategy](#) document (updated 5/15/21) states that schools should be the highest priority in-person essential service (i.e. last to close, first to open). This is because the benefits of in-person school are critically important to promote child development, education, and physical and mental health. This is especially true among communities such as the Navajo Nation that have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR COVID-19:

Continual Best Practices to Prevent Spread of COVID-19

The general guidelines are for everyone living on or visiting the Navajo Nation for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Socially (physically) distance yourselves. Keep at least six-feet apart from others in public
2. Wear a face-mask as personal protective equipment (“PPE”) when in public.
3. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, or having been in a public place. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
4. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
5. To the extent possible, avoid touching frequently-touched surfaces in public places – e.g., gas pumps, ATMs, door handles, handrails, etc. Use a barrier such as a tissue or your sleeve to cover your hands or fingers if you must touch something.
6. Avoid touching your face, nose, eyes, and mouth.
7. Clean and disinfect your home and vehicles to remove germs: practice routine cleaning of frequently-touched surfaces--for example, tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks, steering wheels, door handles, gearshifts, and cell phones.
8. If you feel sick, stay home and do not go to work or school.
9. If you feel sick, contact your medical provider for advice.
10. Continue to follow the local health department, state, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) guidelines.

THE FRAMEWORK:

The Safe Schools Framework includes core and conditional prevention strategies that will allow the Navajo Nation to safely resume critical essential services for children and families. These guidelines apply to Head Start and Pre-K through 12th Grade.

1. “Core prevention” refers to the basic core set of COVID-19 prevention practices that should be always in place. See Table 1.
2. “Conditional prevention” refers to additional strict prevention strategies that will be implemented in phases with higher transmission according to Navajo Nation Gating Criteria.
3. Guidance for schools to implement COVID-19 prevention strategies can be found at <https://www.navajonationdode.org/navajoschoolreopening/>
4. All schools must develop and submit a School Reopening Plan and a completed Reopening Readiness Assessment Attestation form to the Department of Diné Education prior to reopening for in-person learning. Reopening plans and completed forms can be emailed to: schoolreopening@nndode.org.

These guidelines establish that schools should be open for in-person learning across all phases, with core prevention strategies including washing hands, masking, physical distancing, and contact tracing.

The decision to move between the phases will be dependent upon the rate of new COVID-19 cases, availability of testing, and hospital capacity. Before advancing to a less-restrictive status, the Navajo Health Command and Operations Center (NHCO) will determine whether or not certain “gating criteria” have been satisfied. The gating criteria are based on the “Guidelines for Opening up America Again” issued by the White House and CDC.

If there is high transmission, schools should enhance the frequency and implementation of the prevention strategies set forth in this document.

TABLE 1: CORE PREVENTION STRATEGIES

✓ = required	Critical/ Very High Transmission	High Transmission	Substantial Transmission	Moderate Transmission	Low Transmission
Schools OPEN for in-person learning	Selected students	✓	✓	✓	✓
Parent Options For hybrid and/or virtual learning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Masks Universal and Correct Use	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Physical Distancing At least 3-6 feet between students in classroom	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Student Cohorting Divide students into smaller groups by classrooms and buses	✓	✓			
Hygiene, Cleaning and Ventilation Handwashing, Maintain healthy facilities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Diagnostic Testing Referral of symptomatic or exposed individuals to health care facility for testing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Contact Tracing Timely Isolation & Quarantine, and contact with local health care facility	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reporting Required To local health care facility HCOC exposure portal, and weekly public notification	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
COVID-19 Vaccination Strongly encouraged (★) for eligible staff and students	★	★	★	★	★

For more detailed guidance on these strategies, refer to the School Reopening Readiness Assessment.

TABLE 2: CONDITIONAL PREVENTION STRATEGY

Strategy	Setting & Description		Frequency based on transmission level				
			Critical/Very High	High	Substantial	Moderate	Low
Screening Testing (Options are in the Additional Information section) Note: vaccinated individuals are exempt from screening testing	Classroom	Testing of select groups of unvaccinated teachers, staff, and students	Recommended 1-2x per week for teachers/staff/students			Optional 1x per week for teachers/staff	
		Low and Intermediate Risk	Recommended 1x per week		Optional 1x per week		
	High Risk	Recommended 2x per week		Optional 1x per week			

SCREENING TESTING:

Screening testing is an option for schools to use as part of their conditional prevention strategies. Screening testing is highly recommended to be conducted by trained individuals at the school through a contractor or from the local health facility. There are various testing options available for schools. HCOC will issue separate guidance on Screening Testing for schools.

SUPPLEMENTAL DOCUMENTS:

More specific guidance on each of these topics is outlined in supplemental documents from Department of Diné Education available at: <https://www.navajonationdode.org/navajoschoolreopening/>.

1. Navajo Nation School Reopening Plan
2. Navajo Nation School Reopening Readiness Assessment Attestation form
3. Navajo Head Start Roadmap for Teachers

GLOSSARY:

1. **Cleaning and Ventilation** – Maintaining a healthy environment through routine cleaning and disinfection and proper ventilation for improved indoor air quality.
2. **Cohorting** – Involves creating groups of students that are separated from other groups by at least 6 feet through the entire day. Cohorts can reduce the number of people exposed to COVID-19 if someone tests positive, meaning fewer students and staff would need to be quarantined if there is a positive case.
3. **Contact Tracing** – Part of the process of supporting patients and warning contacts of exposure to stop chains of transmission. Contact tracers inform people if they have been exposed to COVID-19 and to monitor their health for signs and symptoms of COVID-19, get tested, and to self-isolate if they have COVID-19 or were in close contact with someone who tested positive.
4. **COVID-19** (Coronavirus Disease 2019) – a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

5. **Diagnostic Testing** – Intended to identify current infection in individuals and is performed by a health care facility when a person has signs or symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or when a person is asymptomatic but has recent known or suspected exposure to someone with COVID-19.
6. **HCOC** – Health Command Operations Center of Navajo Nation
7. **High Risk Sports** – sports that cannot be done outdoors or with masks.
8. **Low and Intermediate Risk Sports** – sports that can be conducted outdoors, or indoors with masks.
9. **Navajo Nation Gating Criteria** – measures including the rate of new COVID-19 cases, availability of testing, and hospital capacity used by the HCOC to determine the current color phase/status of the Navajo Nation.
10. **Physical Distancing** – Keeping space between oneself and other people outside of one's home.
11. **Public Notification** – Providing on campus COVID-19 lab confirmed positive case frequency to parents and the community via public-facing website, newsletter, or other timely communication method.
12. **Reporting** – School administrators report COVID-19 lab confirmed positive cases to local health care facility, HCOC exposure portal, and weekly public notification while maintaining confidentiality per applicable laws and regulations.
 - Link to HCOC exposure reporting portal:
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfXNhCvzncLJa0lexpZ0hdprnEFEdj-VQQQZju-y9ZzafCkxw/viewform>
13. **Screening Testing** – Testing individuals without symptoms or known contact. Frequency of testing can vary. Additional details in the Additional Information section.
14. **Selected Students** – Limited targeted populations as determined by schools (such as special needs students who need special education services according to their Individualized Education Program (IEP) where certain types of instructional needs and services may best be accomplished in person).

Appendix B

As adopted in the Navajo Nation Department of Health's COVID-19 Safe Schools Framework:

- Schools will have the choice of reopening to in person instruction based on the collaboration with families and local communities.
- In-Person and Hybrid instruction is encouraged in every phase.
- Parents will have the choice to opt out of in-person learning.

Hybrid Model of Instruction

In all phases of this plan (except for Level Purple), schools have the option to provide instruction in a Hybrid model.



In a hybrid model, these are the options that exist in tandem and either on or off campus:

In person learning – small group with teacher in a classroom, often in cohorts that meet several times a week on campus and the rest of the week complete.



Remote instruction- students learn off campus through a virtual manner with teacher. (example, Zoom or google classroom. This learning is done in a synchronous and/or asynchronous manner.



In person remote- students may be on campus logged on to a virtual classroom through Zoom, google classroom, etc.

Paper packets- students who complete assignments on paper and turn in for grades and credit. Teachers support these students through phone, email, texts, etc.

Appendix C- Glossary

Cleaning and Ventilation – Maintaining a healthy environment through routine cleaning and disinfection and proper ventilation for improved indoor air quality. Refer to Navajo Nation School Safety Guidelines for recommendations.

Cohorting – Involves creating groups of students that are separated from other groups by at least 6 feet through the entire day. Cohorts can reduce the number of people exposed to COVID-19 if someone tests positive, meaning fewer students and staff would need to be quarantined if there is a positive case.

Contact Tracing – Part of the process of supporting patients and warning contacts of exposure to stop chains of transmission. Contact tracers inform people who have been exposed to COVID-19 and should monitor their health for signs and symptoms of COVID-19, get tested, and ask people to self-isolate if they have COVID-19 or self-quarantine if they are a close contact.

COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019) - a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Capacity- The number of occupants for each room (classroom, office, library, etc.) that is determined by the fire code.

Diagnostic Testing – Intended to identify current infection in individuals and is performed by a health care facility when a person has signs or symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or when a person is asymptomatic but has recent known or suspected exposure to someone with COVID-19.

Epidemic/Outbreak- Epidemic refers to an increase, often sudden, in the number of cases of a disease above what is normally expected in that population in that area. Outbreak carries the same definition of epidemic but is often used for a more limited geographic area. Definition provided by CDC.

Essential Worker - Those employees identified by school administration deemed to be necessary to the continued operation of schools. They conduct a range of operations and services that are typically essential to continue critical school operations, including school personnel who support the education of pre-school, K-12, college, university, career and technical education, and adult education students, including professors, teachers, teach aides, special education, and special needs teachers, ESOL teachers, para-educators, apprenticeship supervisors, and specialists.

Exposure - an individual who has come into contact with a cause of, or possessing a characteristic that is a determinant of, a particular health problem.

Flexible Work Schedule - A departure from a normal work schedule. For purposes of COVID-19, a flexible work schedule is intended to reduce the number of employees at the workplace at one time. Therefore, the flexible work schedule might stagger employee work schedules.

HCOC – Health Command Operations Center of Navajo Nation

High-Risk Individual/Population - Individuals of age 65 years or older and those with underlying health conditions: (see list of underlying conditions applicable to [COVID-19 here](#)).

High Risk Sports – sports that cannot be done outdoors or with masks.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) - Defined in IDEA at | 34 CFR §300.22, as follows: Individualized education program or IEP means a written statement for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with §§300.320 through 300.324.

Low and Intermediate Risk Sports – sports that can be conducted outdoors, or indoors with masks.

Navajo Nation Gating Measures – See Appendix A. The most up to date gating measures can be found on the Navajo Nation Department of Health website (***)

Personal Protective Equipment (commonly referred to as “PPE”) - equipment worn to minimize exposure to hazards that cause serious workplace injuries and illnesses. PPE may include items such as gloves, gowns, facemasks, safety glasses/face shields, shoe covers, earplugs or muffs, hard hats, respirators, or coveralls, vests, and full body suits.

Appendix C- Glossary

Physical Distancing – Keeping space between oneself and other people outside of one’s home.

Place of Business - A physical venue at which people conduct “business”, which may include business for profit or non-profit, volunteer services, worship, and any other kind of activity bringing individuals in an enclosed space.

Plan- a planning tool to help school administrators prepare to respond if someone gets sick and to identify special considerations specific to their school community. Implementation should be guided by what is feasible, practical, acceptable, and tailored to the needs and context of each community. Definition provided by CDC.

Protective behaviors- Actions linked to decreasing risk factors for COVID-19 through the knowledge and implementation of CDC best practices such as hand washing, sanitizing, social distancing, mask wearing, etc.

Public Notification – Providing on campus COVID-19 lab confirmed positive case frequency to parents and the community via public-facing website, newsletter, or other timely communication method.

Reopening Readiness Assessment (RRA) Team Members - The following members are recommended to serve on the RRA to conduct a thorough assessment are defined as:

Administrator- superintendent, principal, vice principal, counselor, or other employee that would act with the authority of the Principal/Superintendent in the event of their absence.

Local health worker- school nurse (can be at school or from neighboring school if necessary), health educator, employee that has knowledge of public health and/or health safety best practices, employee that would manage a student medical safety emergency.

Educator- teacher, librarian, paraeducators/paraprofessionals

Facility/maintenance representative- facility department manager, BIE facilities maintenance person, employee knowledgeable of facility and maintenance systems, or custodial staff who are knowledgeable about facilities maintenance.

Parent/guardian or community member: A parent/guardian who has at least one student attending the school or a community member, who has been a resident of the community for over a decade.

Reporting – School administrators report COVID-19 lab confirmed positive cases to local health care facility, HCOC exposure portal, and weekly public notification while maintaining confidentiality per applicable laws and regulations.

Link to HCOC exposure reporting portal:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfXNhCvzncLJa0lexpZ0hdprnEFEj-VQQQZju-y9ZzafCkxw/viewform>

Screening Testing – Testing individuals without symptoms or known contact. Frequency of testing can vary. Additional details in the Additional Information section.

Social or Physical Distancing - also known as “physical distancing,” means keeping space between oneself and other people outside of one’s home. For purposes of COVID-19, social / physical distancing requires keeping at least six feet between oneself and others.

Symptom screening- A screening tool made up of questions/checklists, to make decisions on when to seek testing and medical attention and/or to allow entry into a school building.

Synchronous & Asynchronous learning- Synchronous learning happens with all individuals are learning together at one time (example, a classroom meeting on an online platform or a live session). Asynchronous learning occurs online or offline, on the schedule of the learner and can be done through recorded videos, work packets, and other work provided by instructor.

504 Plan- Section 504 is a civil rights law and prohibits discrimination on the basis of disabling conditions by programs and activities receiving or benefiting from federal financial assistance. The plan that is created for a child who qualifies and attends a school receiving Federal funding. For more information, [click here](#).